



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy  
Chuluota VFW Veterans Day Celebration  
Chuluota, FL  
*November 11, 2017*

Good evening. I'm Stephanie Murphy, and I represent Seminole County and part of Orange County in Congress.

I want to say a simple, heartfelt thank you to all veterans, especially those from Chuluota, Oviedo, and throughout central Florida.

Every day—but especially on Veterans Day—our nation should express its gratitude to the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who wore the uniform. We should let the veterans in our life know that we appreciate the sacrifices they made to keep this country free, democratic and secure.

Veterans tend to be humble, and to deflect praise. But I hope they take quiet pride upon realizing how much their service matters to the American public they swore an oath to defend.

Veterans Day has great personal meaning for me. When I was an infant, my parents, my brother and I fled communist Vietnam by boat, but became stranded at sea. A U.S. Navy vessel came to our rescue, refueling and resupplying us, and helping us arrive safely in Malaysia. After a few months at a refugee camp, we made the passage to the United States and ultimately became proud and patriotic American citizens.

Therefore, for me, members of the U.S. military have always personified bravery and discipline, but they have also epitomized generosity and grace. In a very real sense, I owe my life to them.

After 9/11, I went to work at the Department of Defense, where I became close friends with many service members. I spent long hours with them, shared countless meals with them, and comforted their families when they deployed to war. I grieved when they returned home with physical or psychological wounds, and mourned in those terrible instances when they did not come home at all.

These relationships served to transform my childhood reverence for the U.S. military into something even more real—a deep, enduring respect.

The truth is that military service is honorable, but it is also hard. Men and women in uniform, who represent a small fraction of the American public, endure conditions and circumstances that few civilians experience.

A more complicated truth is that, while serving in the military is hard, leaving the military can be even harder.

Being in the armed forces can provide purpose, structure, friendships of profound depth, and a sense of fulfillment that comes with risking your life for something greater than yourself.

It is no surprise that many veterans report feeling isolated and unmoored once they take off the uniform for the last time. They re-enter a society that is genuinely grateful for their service, but that may not truly understand what that service entailed. There is a military-civilian divide in this nation that we as a society must work to bridge.

In Congress, I am guided by a simple principle. Veterans fought fiercely for this country. To show our gratitude, this country should fight fiercely for them. Not just on Veterans Day, but every day.

Thank you and happy Veterans Day!